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In the sad dells, haunts of some mourning pines,  
With music's glee, the sunset birds pour forth  
Their royal concert. Unnumbered flowers blow;  
Broad ferns are weaving stuffs, such never wove  
The grimy artisan.

Dear mother Nature!

How might I, thy feeble, failing child, return  
Fit love? Impossible! For didst thou not  
Still fondly please me, when my froward heart,  
Turning, stood careless, and yet a son of thine?  
The Universe is one harmonious hope  
To him who, with a trusting mind and true  
Humility, will seek and find that love.—  
Meeting eternities do gird us round!  
In such a peacefulness as he enjoys,  
The poet in his heart can worship these,  
Whether he tread the margin of earth's shores,  
And hear the dash of her white-crested waves,  
Or where the rocks splinter the breeze of heaven,  
Kissed by some slight, wild violets at their shafts,  
That tempt the whispering goddess of the wind,  
On her ethereal voyage when time is past;  
And grace, and joy, and gentleness, are all  
The sweet employment of the people there.

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## AN UNCONVENTIONAL VIEW OF GOETHE AND GERMAN FICTION.

By F. G. FAIRFIELD.

Lounging about the Astor Library the other day, having just digested Bayard Taylor's translation of "Faust," and his very elaborate introduction to the same, together with M. Dumas' absurd critique, I betook myself, by way of contrast with the impressions of an American poet and a Parisian dramatist, to the task of ascertaining what a German critic might have to say, and to a running commentary on the views of all three, thinking out my conclusions as I went along.

Gorged as the general public has been with versions of sentimentally sensational German novels, to the exclusion of essay and criticism, some few at least are aware that Julian Schmidt—an experienced and able German critic, and, saving

St. René Tallandier, the most elaborate analyst of Freytag which "Debit and Credit" and the "Lost Manuscript" have called forth—has recently written a book on the Literature of Prussia, in which he offers some new estimates of living and dead German masters, and discriminates acutely between the Weimar school of fiction and the school of Berlin, tracing the origin and progress of the latter from mysticism to the illuminati, and thence to the mere reporting of such writers as Mrs. Mundt, recently deceased. Mr. Schmidt's views are of high interest, as those of a man standing at the head of German criticism, and properly the historian of German literature; though he is rather a Prussian than a German, and has more sympathy with Berlin than with the nation at large. The hegemony of the Prussian capital is to him something it were treason to doubt. Hence he finds the source of Teutonic culture in the activity of the Prussian intellect, and is so deliciously direct as to trace the moral power of German literature to the disciplined social organization perpetuated by Carlyle's hero-man, Frederick the Great. According to Mr. Schmidt, Berlin is the modern Rome (*ergo*, Emperor William is the modern Cæsar); while Vienna is Corinth (perhaps, though, the critic is not explicit as to this point); Leipsic, Athens; other centres of thought being typical of other Greek cities doomed to pay tribute to the all-conquering Roman.

As Mr. Schmidt is Prussian, this is modest; were he Saxon, Bavarian, or Austrian, he might be compared to Pindar composing Olympics for the best market. Being native, he is patriotic, and expresses the self-consciousness of his state in a manner deliciously self-conscious—somewhat depreciating the merits of Goethe and his Weimar disciples, and dislodging Hegel and his, to make room for Kant and his. "Prussian literature is Roman; moral, indomitable," suggests Mr. Schmidt; "dealing in ideas of law and order, not in mere beauty-trumpery; and thus whatsoever is vital in German activity takes its motion from Berlin or subordinate Halle."

The essayist of Prussia errs in material respects: for Goethe wrote at a date when the dualism of German thought (Hegel's infinite potentiality amusing its unconscious self in blowing bubbles of egotism and creating a dumb-show

termed the phenomenal) was a somewhat distinct element in German works of imagination.

It has been this spectre of dualism—in which the ideal is one thing, the real another—that has vitiated the efforts of German imagination thus far, not only in the novel and the tale, but even in painting and the kindred arts. From a philosophical aspect represented by Hegel in theology, Strauss has pushed it to its logical deduction in his mythological theory of the origin of the Old and New Testaments, though the germ of that hypothesis was suggested by Heine. In fiction, it appears distinctly in the earlier masters, and with semi-distinctness in Goethe, though as a mystifying undercurrent that, meaning nothing distinctly, means anything the reader may prefer. The Weimar master may be regarded as the first in German fiction to subordinate the ideal to the real, at least partially: mystification forming consequently one of the elements of his literary art. Conscious that in the manner of the old masters, which is openly allegorical, and regards the body of fiction as but the expression of an ideal soul, no realism is possible, he so far subordinates the idea to the organic body as to give an air of reality to the latter while preserving the perspective of the former. With him, the literary purpose is not allegorical, but realistic; but none the less is he so far affected by the earlier canons as to simulate an ideal undercurrent—his works thus marking a transition age, in which the interpretation of the ideal is no longer regarded as necessary to true fiction, but in which, notwithstanding, a background of something resembling the ideal in its antique form takes the place of its definite presence.

It is in the misapprehension of his method that Goethe has puzzled his critics, Mr. Taylor and M. Dumas, no less than the rest: in the fact that he represents almost uniquely the transition of German fiction from dualism to realism, and is therefore distinctly representative neither of the one nor of the other, but of qualities common to both. He deludes with jack-o'-lanterns of inner meaning and elaborate and carefully conjured will-o'-the-wisps of suggestion—which the reader follows only to find himself exploring dismal marshes of nothingness or swamped in dreamy ferns of illusion; and so vividly is the student impressed with the mystifications of

the romancer, so clever are their *simulacra* of the ideas that rendered early German fiction but a body of elaborate fables, that even the keenest have been deluded into endless speculation as to inner meanings that are not (and were not intended to be) definitely present. Like Schlegel in his estimate of *Hamlet*, students have been overprofound in their dissection of the method of Goethe, having interpreted him by the mystic dualism of his predecessors, rather than as the connecting link between a fiction that bordered upon mythology and a later and distinct realism as illustrated by Freytag. In his "Wilhelm Meister," for instance, the critic who judges from the stand-point of historical progress will see a work in which the ideal atmosphere of the antique masters is artistically feigned, not one in which it serves an allegorical purpose.

The difference is this: with them, the ideal was a substance, the form merely an expression; with him, the ideal is an atmosphere, not a substance—an element of literary art, not an inner reality. With them, form was but a symbol of subjective potentiality. Distinctly the idea is potential, the form phenomenal, in Hegel's sense of the word; the universe of fact and fiction, one vast and long-drawn allegory. Form fluctuates to every pulsation of the potential idea; and, as with Novalis, the ideal and real run in parallel series.

The fluctuating element with Goethe is, on the other hand, the ideal, not the real; and, like a pendulum, he oscillates between the symbolism of the antique and the unmixed life-painting of the modern, dimly recognizing the fact that life is infinitely broader and fuller than any system of ideas and morals, but so far obedient to the artistic consciousness of his day as to find his art in the simulation of that which to him is vaguely unequal to the demand of the literary purpose. He felt the inadequacy of the old, but could not shuffle it off. Hence his enigmas, his contradictions, his suggestions of undercurrent, the crystallization of his ideas here and there into gnomic maxims;—in short, his conscious and determinate mystification. Like Pindar, who represents a somewhat similar transition in Greek lyric poetry, he is a consummate artist in a somewhat imperfect school of art. Like Pindar's dramatic contemporary, the sullen son of Euphorion, whom Cole-

ridge with just a grain of reason styles the poet of philosophical mystics, his mysticism is a conscious element of effect, not the lurid fullness of illumination that appears in the earlier exponents of idealism; and, like Pindar's tragic contemporary, he is rather transcendental than mystical. He presents the curious phenomenon in fiction, of a conscious control of the lightning that flickers from the clouds of fantastic revery common to his predecessors. He intellectualizes fog and mist.

As Mr. Lewes has very justly remarked, no man with the fear of the critics before his eyes would have dared to mystify the public as Goethe did in Wilhelm Meister's *Wanderjahre*. Mr. Lewes should have qualified, however, by saying *English critics*; for German criticism, quite without notable exception, regards fiction merely as a means of philosophical instruction, and dips so deep into inner senses as to forget questions of execution. Profound in its discourse upon the laws of fiction, it has no room for the discussion of its rules. The question it moots is not whether this or that is unnatural, but what were the motives of the author for leaving the trodden path.

*"Erkenne, Freund, was er geleistet hat,  
Und dann erkenne was er leisten wolte,"*

says one of the wisest of the Teutonic poets. "Regard the writer's purpose, and thus interpret his work"—an aphorism not far from correct in its intent to be just to authors, but wofully abused by German critics in the practical application.

One single consideration—that of his own keen insight into the laws of art as he interpreted them—seems to me conclusively to establish the hypothesis that Goethe employed the philosophical, and often the mystical, atmosphere as a mere element of coloring. He knew his public, his critics, himself. Of all literary artists, he is the least instinctive and the most self-conscious in his work, and comes nearest to Poe's idea of a man voluntarily creating, managing, and modulating predetermined and predigested effects. Indeed, in this self-conscious spontaneity of poesy, Poe curiously resembles and peculiarly reproduces Goethe; and if, as Meres, the author of the "*Palladis Tamia*," contended, the soul of Euphorbos

reappeared in Pythagoras, that of sweet and witty Ovid in mellifluous Shakespeare, surely the soul of the German master migrated to America in Poe. Not that their results, but that their methods, are akin: both being conscious of their artistic processes, and as far removed from instinctive as can possibly be imagined. Poe had a vanity in working deliberately, or pretending that he did, that may well occasion a doubt of his veracity in the version he gives of the composition of the *Raven*, though it is neither a great nor a spontaneous poem, and is one that might have been produced under the conditions so minutely dissected. Goethe's self-analysis and artistic introspection were the results of longing to find the true method. Yet so overbearing was the mastery that Hegel's philosophical system had obtained in German thought, so thoroughly imbued with vain speculations about the phenomenal and the potential, the real and the ideal (the first mere visionary nothing that seemed to be something, the last a blind and unconscious infinite becoming conscious in dumb spectacle), was the German mind in his age, that, acute as he was, it did not occur to the poet to doubt the precepts of the philosopher. "The rational is the real," said Hegel. "Therefore," said the poet to himself, and his works say the same, "the processes of art must be rationally conscious, step by step, through all the windings of artistic elaboration"; and to the extent of his ability he persisted in making them so. That which with Poe was a pet vanity, a kind of ferocious exultation of the powers of analysis, was with Goethe a philosophical dogma which he struggled to apply.

This was Goethe's limitation: that he could not get rid of the everlasting spectre of himself at his work. Had it occurred to him to doubt Hegel, had he been a materialist, he would have been greater than he was, though less puzzling, in poetry and fiction; for in fiction, as in painting, anything is preferable to the gum-elastic dualism, working itself out in myth and allegory, incident always to a certain stage of philosophical thought.

Jean Paul exhibits the sentimental and humorous phases of it. And what droning sentences he pens about groves being the footsteps of angels; and how ineffably more beau-

tiful than this elaborate sentiment, conscious of its own prettiness and spreading its tail peacock fashion; is the dreamy and solemn hush of pervading and soul-felt mysticism that colors the work of the elder masters in Germany!

Defer to Carlyle—defer to Longfellow—defer to the German-mad critics of London and New York as one may, and there are fewer of the German-mad to whom to defer than was the case before German reading had become general—defer to vague and somewhat transcendental dicta, because they come from Goethe, or Lessing, or Julian Schmidt, till the German impulse is worn as threadbare as “*Il Barbiere di Seviglia*” at the Academy of Music,—but it is still certain that the fiction of Germany is thirty years behind that of England, and that German criticism is equally inadequate and impracticable. Deals the one in vast and fantastic pagodas of literary creation, the other in vast and fantastic pagodas of abstract ratiocination.

Thus Bunsen, eminent as a critic among Germans, in his introduction to a translation of one of Freytag’s novels, maintains propositions like these:—“Every romance is intended as a new *Iliad* or *Odyssey*; in other words, a poetic representation of a course of events consistent with the highest laws of moral government, whether it delineates the general history of a people, or follows the fortunes of an ideal hero; and whoever passes in review the romances of the last three centuries, will find that those only have arrested the attention of more than one or two generations which have satisfied this condition of fiction. Every other romance, be it ever so blatant in its moralizations, is still really immoral.”

In harmony with this theory of romance, high but impracticable, the author of “*On the Heights*,” in his very able essay on *Goethe and the Art of Narration*, styles Wilhelm Meister the modern Ulysses, indulging in numerous long-drawn parallels more profound than just; for, though Goethe’s story is replete with the elements of permanence, it is permanent by reason of the nature there is in it, not on account of its constructive mystifications. In fact, the whole philosophy of novel writing is summed up by Lessing in the single sentence, “Good stories, well told”—a definition of more value than the subtleties that qualify it—and had Goethe been governed



by it, and not by the speculative theories of art that came near vitiating his mighty powers, his romances would have embodied nobler elements than those which now puzzle translators. What if the Pindar of Latin poetry did set up wisdom as a sort of grand fetich of fiction :

“ *Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons?* ”

It by no means results that Horace was a profound critic on that account; for the wisdom needed by the novelist is that of the human heart, not that of philosophical gossamers. Indeed, the same dualism that vitiates the primitive fiction of the Germans, and has led Teutonic critics into tangles of incomprehensible and useless speculation, is with the Greeks and Romans a fixed condition of thought, whence Plato, with all his subtlety, was unable to escape, and which compelled him to adopt the *mythos* as the real basis of fiction. A noble lie was poetry — “looking through a glass darkly” was romance. Fiction was not truth, but, not being so consummate a liar as ordinary fact, it was important as an educator in the direction of truth.

What did Goethe in his theory of art but affect to repeat the Platonic definition, and attempt an impossible combination of that definition with dawning modern realism? What was the result? An endless series of mystifications, in which the truth to nature struggles with the limitations created by an effort to imbue full, large, natural life-painting, with a perspective of symbolism. An arcanum of enigmas only to be guessed by reference to the key: that of a conscious recognition of the fact that the interpretation of life as it is observed is the only road to powerful results, with an endeavor, either conscious or instinctive (fair analysis favors the former), to marry the old and new in one body. Thus his works represent the dusky twilight of later realism, and should be studied as examples of a transition going on, but not completed: indeed, only half fruited in the later fiction of Freytag, Paul Heyse, and the vast horde of imitators of Dickens, who imitate nothing except his *grotesquerie* and tension, now overslaughing the native originality of Germany, and struggling to effect an impossible combination of philosophical bombast with observation from life. Those who grope after deep philosophical symbolism in Goethe's fiction, grope

after shadow : after that which seems to be, but is not. His symbolism and smack of the allegorical are affected, not real ; dodges of art and tricks of literary legerdemain, not earnest presentations of the ideal through the fluctuating rhythm of the real ; effects deliberately adopted ; the antique idealism of the old masters measured off by the yard, by way of literary gilding and atmosphere. He deals in artistic mystifications, not in mysticism.

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## URANIA.

By JOHN ALBEE.

Thick grow beneath my feet the clover leaves,  
Yet I the four-leaved never chance to find ;  
Some blank and fatal number always weaves  
Its cipher strange on all my moody kind.  
But once by love my idle youth was stirred,  
When the heart yearns nor knows for what it yearns ;  
When we are captive to a glance or word  
From the same fire that in our bosom burns.  
That flame expires ; but life some glow retains,  
Beneath the ashes of the passions' strife ;  
In me the fond heart as of old hath pains,  
But hides like other men its inward life.  
When comes the afternoon the day is done ;  
A gentler warmth, but no resistless heat ;  
From what proud heights looked down the radiant sun  
When first I, honored, sat beside her feet !  
The ground with clover blooms was fragrant then,  
And all the happy flowers she knelt above  
Looked into eyes which made them bloom again  
And keep a longer summer for her love.  
Wave fell on wave of unbound, sunny hair ;  
And her faint eyebrow's pencilled curve was drawn  
Across a low, sweet forehead, chaste and fair  
As hers who hunts the deer at early dawn.  
Thenceforth such fearful hopes and hopeful fears  
As all first lovers' eager hearts control  
Rose in me day and night, in joy or tears,  
Till self was gone and she possessed my soul.